

2015 MBC ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

1st Session | Tuesday Morning | October 27, 2015

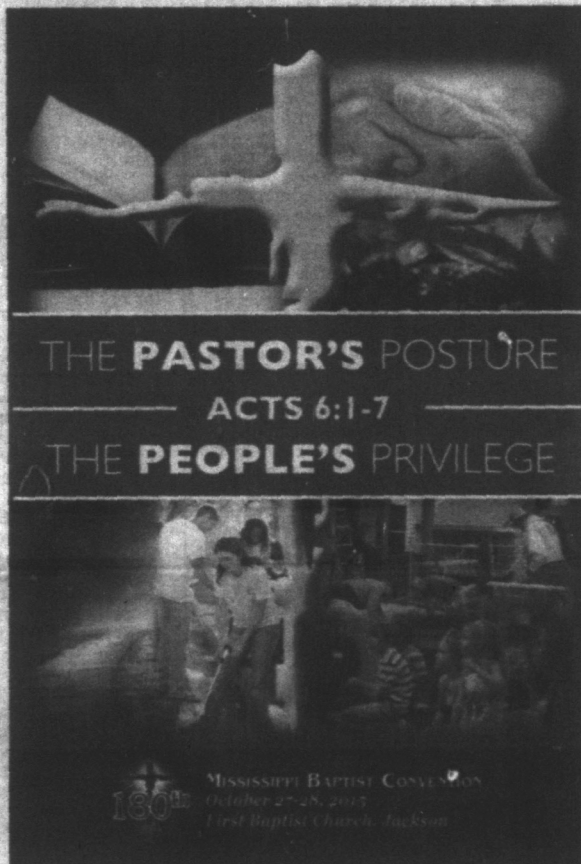
8:30	Call to Order	Matt Buckles
	Worship through Music	Gerry Gore
	Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:11-16	Jim Woodyear
	"The Privilege of Knowing My Ministers"	Terry Stutzman
	Opening Prayer	J. Clark
9:00	Organization of the Convention	Matt Buckles
	Recognition and Seating of Messengers	
	Committee on Order of Business Report	LaRue Stephens
	Announcement of Credentials and Tellers Committees	Matt Buckles
	Welcome	Bob Gladney
9:15	Worship through Music	Sanctuary Choir
		First Baptist Church, Vicksburg
		Warren Baptist Association Choir
9:20	Report of Committee on Committees	Thad Moore
9:25	Bible Treasures	Waylon Bailey
9:50	Presentations of Resolutions	
9:55	Worship through Music	Gerry Gore
10:00	Business Session: Election of the President	Matt Buckles
10:20	Convention Board Report	Mark Vincent
10:30	Choral Praise	Sanctuary Choir
		First Baptist Church, Vicksburg
		Warren Baptist Association Choir
10:35	Christian Action Commission Report	
10:50	Concert of Praise	Sanctuary Choir
		First Baptist Church, Vicksburg
		Warren Baptist Association Choir
11:00	President's Address	Matt Buckles
11:35	Benediction	Derrick Wilson

2nd Session | Tuesday Afternoon | October 27, 2015

1:30	Concert of Praise	Mississippi Singing Churchmen
1:45	Call to Order	Gary Wyatt
	Congregational Praise	Tim Moak
	Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7	Webb Armstrong
	"The People Minister to Me"	Dr. Forrest Sheffield
	Opening Prayer	Wade Humphries
2:10	Bible Treasures	Waylon Bailey
2:35	Concert of Praise	Mississippi Singing Churchmen
2:45	Business Session	Matt Buckles
	Presentation of 2016 Budget	Gary Richardson
	Results of Election as President	
	Election of Convention Officers	
	Presentation of Resolutions	
	Miscellaneous Business	
3:10	Music Feature	Sanctuary Choir
		First Baptist Church, Clinton
3:15	Business Session	Matt Buckles
	Election of Convention Officers	
	Miscellaneous Business	
3:30	Church Planting Report	
3:40	Congregational Praise	Tim Moak
3:45	Missions Mobilization	Ken Rhodes
3:55	Choral Praise	Sanctuary Choir
		First Baptist Church, Clinton
4:05	Convention Sermon	David Eldridge
4:40	Benediction	Robby Rikard

3rd Session | Tuesday Evening | October 27, 2015

6:30	Choral Praise	Combined Choirs
6:35	Call to Order	Matt Buckles
	Final Presentation of Resolutions	
	Congregational Praise and Worship	Slater Murphy
	Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:7-13	Chris Williams
	"The Privilege of Serving with My Ministers"	
	Opening Prayer	Gerald Hasselman
		Adam Wyatt
7:00	Choral Praise	Combined Choirs
7:10	Congregational Praise and Worship	Slater Murphy
7:15	Choral Praise	Combined Choirs
7:25	Message	Jim Futral
8:00	Combined Choirs	
8:05	Benediction	Mike Racey



4th Session | Wednesday Morning | October 28, 2015

8:30	Call to Order	Larry Young
	Worship through Music	The CP Singers
	Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:3-11	Charles E. Young
	"The People Love Me"	Willy Weddle
	Opening Prayer	Andy Boles
8:55	Memorial Service	Bruce Cappleman
9:05	Mississippi Baptist Foundation Report	Daniel Hall
9:15	Introduction of College Presidents	Matt Buckles
9:20	Blue Mountain College Report	Barbara C. McMillin
9:30	Worship through Music	The CP Singers
9:35	Bible Treasures	Waylon Bailey
10:00	Recognition of Bivocational Pastor of the Year	Michael Lee
10:10	Business Session	Matt Buckles
	Adoption of 2016 Budget	Gary Richardson
	Committee on Nominations Report	Danny Smith
	Time, Place, and Preacher Committee Report	Chip Stevens
	Resolutions Committee Report	Bryant Barnes
	Miscellaneous Business	Matt Buckles
10:30	Baptist Children's Village Report	Rory Lee
10:40	Music Feature	The CP Singers
10:50	Message	Russell Moore
11:30	Closing Remarks	Matt Buckles
11:35	Benediction	Hugo Villegas

On the inside

For information about preschool care during the convention, see page 9.

Messenger cards

Messenger cards for the 180th Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 27-28 at First Church, Jackson, will be mailed directly to churches during the second week of October. Each church will receive the number of cards for which the church is eligible according to the guidelines of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Constitution: "Each church in friendly cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and having contributed to world missions through the Cooperative Program during the preceding convention year shall be entitled to two messengers for the first one hundred members of its membership or fraction thereof. One additional messenger from each church shall be allowed for each additional one hundred members, or major fraction thereof, but no church shall be entitled to more than ten messengers." Membership information is based on the 2014 Annual Church Profile. For more information, contact MBCB executive administration at (601) 292-3201 or toll free at (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: mteel@mbcb.org.

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Views on the visit

Southern Baptists and Catholics are about as far apart on most important theological matters as they could possibly be. If Southern Baptists had been around at the time of the Reformation, we would probably have been handing the nails to Martin Luther as he stood at the door of Wittenberg Castle Church.

Thus the visit to the United States just ended of Pope Francis, the titular head of Catholics worldwide, was not such a big deal in Southern Baptist country. After all, no government entities like The White House or news media conglomerates like the big networks have ever made such a fuss when the president of the Southern Baptist Convention makes an official visit to Washington, D.C.

There were some activities and events during the pope's visit that drew the concern of Protestant leaders. The U.S. government officially recognizes the Holy See, as the Vatican "nation" is known, as a political entity like Sweden or Japan or Argentina. Both Democrat and Republican U.S. presidents have all appointed political ambassadors to the Vatican since Ronald Reagan began the practice during his administration.

Perhaps we could declare 901 Commerce Street in Nashville — the home of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee — as a country and designate Frank Page, president of the Executive Committee, as the Pope of our new "nation." Maybe then the attention-grabbing politicians in D.C. would pay us heed.

Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? That's a fair comparison to the status of today's Vatican, however.

Although we would disagree with some (if not much) of what the pope chose to say and do during this visit to the U.S., his conduct pales in comparison to the conduct of the highest representative of the American people.

Not one to miss a political opportunity even if he has to pull it out of thin air, Barack Obama made a point of inviting a who's who of perversity to The White House to rub elbows with Pope Francis. The list included:

■ Gene Robinson, the now-retired Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire who made national news in 2004 when the Episcopal Church officially consecrated him as a bishop while he was openly living a homosexual lifestyle.

■ Aaron LeDesma, who blogs as "The Gay Catholic" while he attempts to blend homosexuality with his Catholic faith.

■ Sister Simone Campbell, an activist lawyer and member of the Sisters of Social Service who founded NETWORK to promote social justice causes.

■ Vivian Taylor, the transgender executive director of Integrity USA, an entity of the Episcopal Church dedicated to encouraging parishioners to "proclaim and embody God's all-inclusive love for LGBTQ persons and those who love them," according to the organization's web site.

Taylor told CNS News that he/she will also be allowed to bring five guests to The White House — all five of which will be either transgender themselves or deeply involved in the movement. "I'm very happy to meet my brother in Christ, Pope Francis," Taylor told CNS News.

Conservative Catholics weren't quite as enthused. "You don't treat the head of the Roman Catholic Church as a political toy in order to push your own agenda," Michael Hichborn, president of the Catholic watchdog group The Lepanto Institute, told FoxNews.com.

Obama also openly embarrassed the American people when he lamely attempted to counter the pope's pronouncements on religious liberty.

At a welcoming ceremony Sept. 23, the pope told President Obama and an audience on the White House's south lawn that American Catholics and others desire respect for their "right to religious liberty."

"That freedom reminds one of America's most precious possessions," the pope said. "[A]ll are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it."

Apparently insulted by the pope's insolence, Obama said at a Democratic National Committee gala fundraiser for LGBT causes in New York City on the evening of Sept. 27, "We affirm that we cherish our religious freedom and are profoundly respectful of religious traditions, but we also have to say clearly that our religious freedom doesn't grant us the freedom to deny our fellow Americans their constitutional rights."

Huh? Note from editor to American people: Next time, please elect someone dignified as president and not an ideologue, because they'll embarrass us every time. Thank you.

Kicking the 'Goodness Gospel'

I lived according to the Goodness Gospel for far too long, but God pursued me. He used multiple people to reveal my goodness addiction and to show me both His true nature and the truth of what He had done for me at the cross.

He used my husband most of all. About a year into our marriage, Kyle and I got into a life-changing fight. I snapped at him about something trivial, and instead of snapping back he just calmly left the room. As soon as he left, I felt ashamed. Why had I gotten so angry about something of such small consequence? Why would I choose to hurt my husband like that? With my tail between my legs, I went to him.

"I'm sorry," I said, pleading with my eyes for him to release me of what I'd done. "I forgive you," he said, and he meant it. He actually smiled as he said it.

"That's it?" I thought. No penance required, no pouting, no silent treatment, no dumping-on of shame, nothing? It's just forgiven that easily?

My eyes must have revealed my uncertainty because he reached out for my hand and pulled me to his lap. Then he wrapped his arms around me, looked me in the eyes and reiterated, "I forgive you. I love you, Christine."

As we embraced, the Lord whispered to my heart that was deaf to true forgiveness and grace, "I don't keep a record of wrongs or hold your sin over your head. When you confess something to me, I forgive you. I delight in you."

God, through the book of Galatians, had begun showing me how little I truly understood of the Gospel. Instead of the true Gospel, I was living by what the Apostle Paul called the "perverted" gospel, one of works and dead religion. My heart and mind were starting to wake up to the truth because my husband had become a pastor, and our new ministry life was shining a bright light on my self-sufficiency and attempts at self-justification.

I could not meet ministry's demands, and I certainly could not love according to bootstrap religion.

The beacon of light, simultaneously convicting and life-giving, was Gala-



Guest opinion
with Christine Hoover

tians 5:4: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law." That is exactly how I felt — like an outsider standing apart from Christ, nose plastered to the glass, trying desperately to earn my belonging. At the same time, I rejected any of Christ's advances toward me out of shame over my failures and out of my stubborn self-determination.

This passage described how I'd felt most of my Christian life: entangled, weighed down under a heavy yoke, in bondage, in debt, and most of all as if I were estranged from Christ. It also showed me why I felt that way: my obsession with goodness had nullified Christ's work in my life. Because I hadn't gone His way, I was on my own.

He eventually got to me. He showed me that I sat in a jail cell with an open door but kept putting the chains back on myself instead of running free. He walked alongside me as I discovered the futility of trying to be good by myself and He offered to rescue me, showing me what measure of grace He had already given me at the cross and at the moment I believed.

In time I realized that He loved me, not because of what I did but because of what He did through Christ on the cross. I finally ran wildly to His grace-filled arms, done with my chains. What had always felt like duty and obligation now felt like crazy freedom.

Hoover, a pastor's wife, stay-at-home mom, and writer who blogs at gracecoversme.com, serves with her husband Kyle at Charlottesville Community Church in Charlottesville, Va. This commentary is adapted from her latest book, *From Good to Grace: Letting Go of the Goodness Gospel* (Baker, 2015), and appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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BAPTISTS

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Pope's congressional speech challenged by So. Baptists

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Pope Francis' historic address to the U.S. Congress on Sept. 24 proved troubling in both its lack of clarity on moral issues and in its church-state impropriety, Southern Baptist leaders and pastors said.

When the pope, leader of the Roman Catholic Church worldwide, spoke to the joint session of Congress, he became the first head of the Church to address the U.S. legislative body. His speech came on the final day of a three-day visit to Washington, D.C., that featured a White House welcoming ceremony, a parade, and a mass for the canonization of a Catholic saint.

In his congressional speech, Pope Francis commented on a variety of issues but without being particularly specific on abortion and marriage.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, expressed gratitude the pope spoke to Congress "about the dignity of all human life, whether the unborn, the elderly or the immigrant, as well as the importance of the family in a free and flourishing society."

However, Biloxi native Moore went on to say, "I do think that the pope's address was an opportunity to address urgent moral issues like abortion, culture, and religious liberty with more clarity and directness than what was delivered."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the pope's reference to abortion and marriage "was a very fuzzy and evasive approach that left many people wondering if he was actually talking about either abortion or marriage at all."

The invitation by congressional leaders to the head of a religious body to speak to legislators also was problematic in itself, said Mohler and some Southern Baptist pastors.

"I wonder what evangelical religious figure would be accorded such an opportunity," said Mark Dever, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Church in Washington, D.C., in a written statement for Baptist Press (BP).

Bart Barber, pastor of the First Church in Farmersville, Texas, told BP in written comments, "For Congress to treat a church as though it were a state and the head of a church as though he were the head of a state runs contrary to basic First Amendment principles of disestablishment."

While he commended the pope's advocacy for the sanctity of human life, "together with our Baptist forefathers I ask our government not to extend special diplomatic privileges to the Roman Catholic Church

that it does not extend to any other religion," said Barber, a member of the ERLC's Leadership Network Council.

Mohler described the pope's address to Congress as a "troubling development." Baptists "historically have been very opposed to the United States government recognizing any religion or religious leader in such a way," Mohler had told BP before the pope's visit to Washington.

"[I]t is essential to note that almost no one in the media or in the culture referring to the pope's visit identifies him as a head of state, although that is the legal justification for the fact that he is here on a state visit," Mohler said in his Sept. 23 podcast, *The Briefing*.

In addition to being the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, the pope also is head of the Vatican City State.

In his Sept. 24 podcast, Mohler referred to an observer on National Public Radio who said it should be acknowledged the pope will address Congress as a pastor, not a political leader.

"Well, let's just state the obvious: No other pastor in the history of the United States of America has ever addressed a joint session of Congress," Mohler said.

In March 2014, the Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Buddhists worldwide, was allowed to serve as guest chaplain for the U.S. Senate and offer the opening prayer in the Tibetan language.

Southern Baptists have long stood against such government favoritism of a religious body. The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (BFM), the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) statement of faith, includes in its article on religious liberty: "Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others."

The 1963 version of the BFM includes identical wording, while the 1925 confession has the same language nearly word for word. The BFM was inaugurated by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in 1925, while major updates were approved by messengers to SBC annual meetings in 1963 and 2000.

Southern Baptists also have long opposed political appointment of a U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, the formal name of Vatican leadership. They protested when U.S. President Ronald Reagan named the first ambassador to the Vatican in 1984. The appointment of ambassadors has continued since then under



MEETING BEFORE RESIGNING — Pope Francis (left) and John Boehner, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and a practicing Catholic, meet in the U.S. Capitol on Sept. 24. In a surprise announcement the following day, Boehner said he will be resigning his Ohio congressional seat and retiring in October. (BP photo courtesy of congressional sources)

"I do think that the pope's address was an opportunity to address urgent moral issues like abortion, culture, and religious liberty with more clarity and directness than what was delivered."

Russell Moore
president of the
Southern Baptist
Ethics & Religious
Liberty Commission

every Republican and Democrat president.

Ken Francis Hackett of Boston, former president of Catholic Relief Services and a practicing Roman Catholic, is the current ambassador appointed by U.S. President Barack Obama in 2013.

In his speech to Congress, the pope spoke of the "responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development." He spoke of the importance of the family, but did not explicitly define marriage as only between a man and a woman for life.

The pope addressed the environment, poverty, and immigration in speaking to lawmakers and tens of thousands of

people who watched his speech on Jumbotrons on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol. He also called for a "global abolition" of capital punishment.

He did not mention Jesus Christ, however, in what Mohler called an "amazing development."

The pope's speech, Mohler said in his Sept. 25 podcast, sent "a very clear signal to conservative Catholics" they are facing "exactly what they feared — a pope who is not only leaning left, but is going to take the Roman Catholic Church to the left with him."

Though he expressed some disappointment in the pope's lack of clarity, Moore told BP in written comments, "Even as we Baptists continue to have theological differences with Pope Francis and with the Roman Catholic Church, we can and should look for opportunities to join our voices to speak to issues of life, liberty, and human dignity in the public square."

The pope endorsed religious freedom in both his words and actions during his time in Washington. At a welcoming ceremony Sept. 23, he told President Obama and an audience on the White House's south lawn that American Catholics and others desire respect for their "right to religious liberty."

"That freedom reminds one of America's most precious possessions," the pope said. "[A]ll are called to be vigilant,

precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it."

As if to counter the pope's assertions on religious liberty, U.S. President Barack Obama said at a Democratic National Committee gala fundraiser for LGBT causes in New York City on the evening of Sept. 27, "We affirm that we cherish our religious freedom and are profoundly respectful of religious traditions, but we also have to say clearly that our religious freedom doesn't grant us the freedom to deny our fellow Americans their constitutional rights."

The pope also made a surprise visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor at their convent in Washington, a sign of his support for the Roman Catholic order in its legal fight against the Obama's abortion/contraception mandate, according to the Vatican.

The Little Sisters of the Poor and GuideStone Financial Resources, the SBC's health and financial benefits entity headquartered in Dallas, have joined together to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to accept their appeal of a lower-court ruling that would require non-church-related religious organizations to pay for contraceptives for their employees. Among the required drugs are those that potentially can cause early abortions.

It was the third week of September and I was driving to work on a cloudy morning down a road lined with trees on both sides. With my mind scrambling to deal with a number of things that were going to fill a busy day, suddenly it hit me what I was actually looking at. The trees on my right and on my left were displaying a hint of color — some reddish, some gold. It was the first whisper that fall was on its way.

Every season has its fans. For some, spring is the absolute finest time of the year as we escape the clutches of the cold and enter into the blossoming beauty of flowers everywhere. For others, nothing is better than the hot, humid, hazy, wonderful days of summer. For still others, the cold, gray, windy, chill of winter is their favorite. I suppose for most of us, most of the seasons have their charm and by the time one season wanes and the other one gradually appears we are ready to let go of one and enjoy the wonder that the next season brings.

Fall is most intriguing to me because not only with just some cooler weather, the real beauty that is on display is because of death. I know that technically the trees and bushes are not dying; they're going dormant. On the other hand, their foliage is dying. In that process of death they put on an incredible show of glitz and glamour. The beauty of the dying process is so spectacular that you and I can learn from what we're seeing take place in God's creation.

Living the Christian life is a glorious experience but we should not — must not — forget that the way we die also speaks volumes of our faith, our confidence in our great God, and the lessons that can be learned from not only living but dying in His grace. It doesn't take long in the journey of life for you to build up a real fear of, and trauma



Directions

The Beauty of Death and Dying

about, death. You can be nine or ninety and look at death and only see the Grim Reaper, but as a Christian, as a child of God who recognizes that this is not the only world there is but a world to come, we, of all people, should be able to see and demonstrate the wonder of God at work in life and in death. Just some guidelines to think about as the seasons of life change:

One, we ought to live and die the same way. If you live with God's grace demonstrated in your life and the goodness of God flowing through your life, you have a good chance of coming to the end of life with the same kind of great features demonstrated in who you are. I have a number of Bradford pears around my home. Most of them I planted myself and most every facet of their existence is a blessing. I love when the spring arrives and they bloom out in a full, incredible array of white as though it was a giant snow storm just out on the edge of my yard. They don't last long but oh how

dramatic it is to see them in bloom. As soon as the blooms are gone, the light green leaves appear and while they don't last long, they become the beautiful dark leaves that will shade and show all summer. Then when fall arrives, depending on the rainfall and the other features of the atmosphere they can put on as beautiful a show as almost any foliage. As the growth cycle comes to an end and just before they're nothing but gray limbs sticking up in the air, they live and die in a blaze of glory.

Biblically, I think you could make a case that God would say you give it your best from beginning to end and you can watch as it is demonstrated in our living and dying Savior, or you can see it in Stephen as he serves and dies caring, or you can hear it as the Apostle Paul describes himself as about to be a drink offering that is poured out and cannot be reclaimed but death is coming and he dies victoriously. He lived and died with a sameness about it.

A second thought I would share is that we need to show our best and most beautiful expressions at death. Now, you may not have that opportunity. We don't choose when and where we're going to die, but as life begins to fade just make sure that the end of day experiences include wonderful expressions to the people around you and what you would like to leave once you are gone. In my years of ministry, I have had the privilege, a distinct honor, of being near by people who have taken their last breath. Some of them were conscious up to the end of their lives and many of them said or expressed things that absolutely are profound and blessed my life every time I think about them.

Thirdly, and of such great importance, is that we need to live knowing that we will live when we no longer live. The Scripture says we are not like those who have "no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). We have all the hope in the world. We live in the strength of Christ and at the conclusion of our lives, like the Apostle Paul, we can say, "...to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Gain what? Well, if to live is Christ when we die, we gain more Christ and death taking hold of us does not destroy us so much as it transforms us to the life beyond.

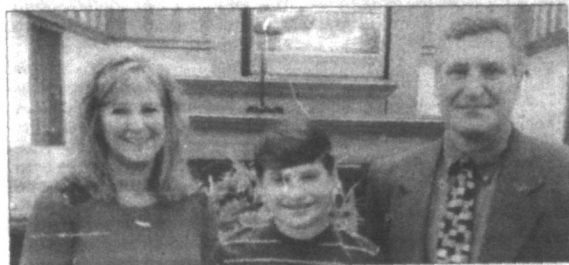
No wonder the Scripture says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15) because he has not only watched Him here on this earth but will have Him right there with him when he takes his last breath. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "...whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (14:8). So follow Him. Live for Him. Die for Him with dignity and grace, abundant joy, and magnificent love.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Staff Changes



DOTY SPRINGS CHURCH, ETHEL, has called Tony Fortenberry as pastor. He is shown with his wife Diane.



CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, has called Jackie Banes as their bivocational pastor. He is shown with his wife Jeana and one of their sons, Bryson.

In other Staff Changes News:

► **Immanuel Church, Greenwood,** has called Jerry Mixon as transitional pastor.

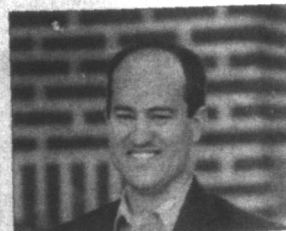
► **Mt. Pleasant Church, Holmes County,** has called Harvey Overstreet as pastor. He was ordained at Ebenezer Church, Attala County, in June, 1996. He pastored SAPA Church in Eupora for eleven-and-a-half years. He and his wife, Tommie, will celebrate their 55th anniversary Nov. 22.

College News



MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE has installed a new walking track. The track is one element of the college's Wellness For Life initiative, made possible by a grant from the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation. Shown are President Lee Royce, Sheila Grogan, executive director of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, and Clinton Mayor Phil Fisher at the September 22 ribbon-cutting.

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE will honor Louis Lau as the Alumnus of the Year. Lau is a 1965 chemistry graduate of the school, and will be recognized Oct. 23 during homecoming. Lau was involved in real estate development in Dallas, and then became a founder and chairman of Asian Info, which brought the Internet and trunk lines to China.



MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE has selected Clay Mansell as Young Alumnus of the Year. He is a 1999 graduate and has launched a business in Clinton, Brick Street Pops and has been president of the local Chamber of Commerce. He is also the owner of Mansell Media and is an executive with the Clinton Courier.



Vacation Bible School



MT. PISGAH CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY: 20 youth, 35 children, and 38 adults. Lanny Haley, pastor.



CALVARY CHURCH, GREENVILLE: June 14 - 17, with a total enrollment of 90.

In other VBS News:

► **Roundaway Church, Doddsville:** June 7 - 12; 78 enrolled, two professions of faith, and \$620.52 missions offering. Bob Hill, pastor; Gina Staggs, director.

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ON THE WAY OUT — As the U.S. Army prepares to draw down its forces approximately 10% by the end of fiscal year 2018, churches can play an integral role in responding to those who will find themselves having to redirect their lives and the lives of their families. So says the executive director of chaplaincy for the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (BP photo courtesy of U.S. Army)

NAMB encourages churches to aid downsized veterans

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Churches have the potential to assist U.S. Army veterans who may find themselves retired prematurely within two years.

A reduction in force was announced by Brig. Gen. Randy George, the Army's director of force management, at the Pentagon in a July 9 briefing. The downsizing may affect 40,000 troops by the end of 2017, the Army News Service reported.

"These are incredibly difficult choices," George said. "The Army followed a long and deliberate process... to determine the best construct for the Army, based on the threats we face and the current fiscal environment we must operate in." George said the Army hopes to draw down the active force gradually to "minimize the turbulence we have with soldiers and their families."

Minimizing that turbulence is where churches can step in, said Doug Carver, a retired major general who served as the Army Chief of Chaplains and now is executive director of chaplaincy for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga.

Churches can be an integral part of re-entry into civilian life, he said. "Military members are our neighbors. Over 85% of our military members, veterans, and their families live in our communities."

"Many of them are unchurched and remain unreached by local churches. Arguably, the military community represents

"Arguably, the military community represents one of the nation's largest unreached people groups."

Doug Carver

executive director of chaplaincy for the North American Mission Board

one of the nation's largest unreached people groups."

NAMB's chaplaincy team has resources available at the NAMB website to assist churches in reaching out to veterans, honoring them and serving them.

Awareness is the first step, Carver said. "We must recognize the significant number of veterans living in the United States. Members of the armed services — active, Reserve/National Guard, and retired — are comprised of over 23 million Americans. Approximately 18% of this number is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention or other Gospel partners."

"Our veterans and their families have a growing need for a cure to their wounds of war that can only be found in the Gospel. A recent study by Baylor University concluded that 'clergy and the church — not psychologists or other mental health experts — are the most common source

of help sought [by our troops] in times of psychological distress."

Carver said churches can take practical steps to assist veterans, including:

■ Maintain an awareness of the needs and sacrifices of our veterans and their families.

■ Create an environment of acceptance for those recovering from their war wounds and other associated trauma.

■ Provide pastoral care to deployed troops, veterans, and their families.

■ Establish reintegration ministry for those returning from a deployment or retiring from the military.

■ Initiate an intentional trauma ministry strategy for military families.

NAMB President Kevin Ezell echoed Carver's suggestions and concern. "This is an important time for churches to be aware of the needs of our military families. These transitions might also mean that many military members can play a greater role in ministry within our churches where their leadership and experience is much needed."

By the close of fiscal year 2018, the Army expects to have reduced in size from 490,000 to 450,000, according to the Army News Service. The Army also plans to cut 17,000 civilian employees. The reductions will come from some 30 Army installations.

To learn more about assisting veterans or about Southern Baptist chaplaincy, visit namb.net/chaplaincy.

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Just for the Record



MT. OLIVET CHURCH, FOREST, held a ground breaking and prayer service for the building of the church's new sanctuary. Shown are Darren Simon, David Tadlock, Don Harrell, pastor Chris Wells, Robert Eddy, Jimmy King, and Richard Pope.



FIRST CHURCH, BROOKLYN, ordained Raymond "Ricky" Conley as deacon Sept. 20. Shown are Carolyn Conley, Conley, and pastor Kyle Jones.



IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREENWOOD, hosted a group from Teen Challenge, who ministered in song and testimony Sept. 13.



SALEM CHURCH, TOOMSUBA, celebrated the unveiling of their Mississippi Historical Marker Sept. 13. The marker commemorates the establishment of the church in 1838. Lamar Lifer, pastor.



STEELE CHURCH, FOREST, ordained Jason Mitchell as deacon Sept. 13. Shown are sons, Keith and Aubrey; daughter Paisley; wife, Christy; Mitchell; daughter Jaycee; and pastor Joey Smith.



ROUNDAWAY CHURCH, DODDSVILLE, recently held its 2015 Men's Bakeoff.



FIRST CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO, ordained Adam Middleton and James Withers as deacons Sept. 13. Also shown are Anna Middleton, Megan Withers, and pastor Barry Corbett.

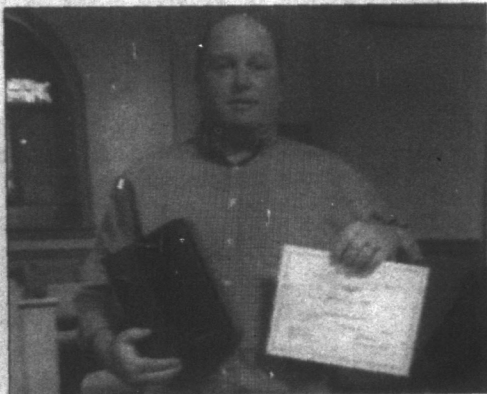


FAIR RIVER CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, held a deacon ordination service Aug. 23 for David Poole. Shown are Vince Mangold, Bobby Smith, Jerry Crane and Sandra; SuAnn and Poole; Lee Dunnam; and pastor Jay Anderson.

Just for the Record



CLIFF TEMPLE CHURCH, ADAMS ASSOCIATION, honored Vera Hawes with a plaque for teaching Sunday School for 50 years. Shown are Hawes and pastor Russell Wagoner. Lee Gillespie, Sunday School director.



IMMANUEL CHURCH, CLEVELAND, ordained John "Benjie" Morgan as deacon Sept. 20.

In other Church News:

➤ **Bissell Church, Tupelo**, will participate in the Praise in the Park event at Ballard Park Oct. 4, 4 p.m. Live music from the Bissell Baptist Praise Band, puppets, and hot dogs.

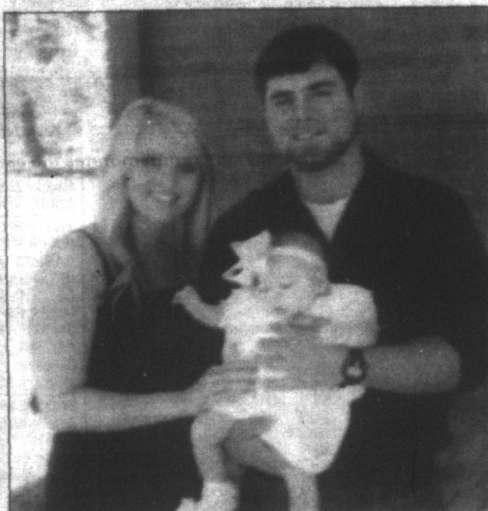
➤ **Shady Grove Church, Mize**, had a baby dedication service Sept. 19 for Lawson Luke Wallace, son of Brian and Deidra Wallace; and for Kadie Clarie Ricks, daughter of Tim and Britney Ricks. Rudy Jackson officiated.



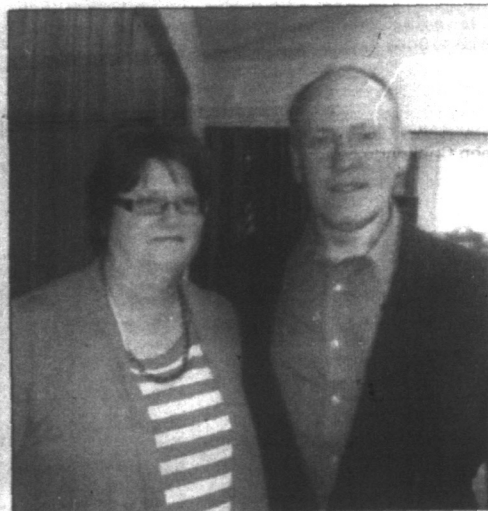
CENTER CHURCH, ATTALA ASSOCIATION, presented Mildred Casey a plaque for her 60 years of service as church clerk and treasurer. She is shown with pastor Jeffery Hutchison.



GASTON CHURCH, BOONEVILLE, recently ordained Jason Flurry as deacon. He is shown with pastor Matt Brown.



PROGRESS CHURCH, MCCOMB, held a baby dedication Sept. 13 for Remleigh Lyn Fulks, daughter of David and Laken Rimes Fulks. Stephen Slump, pastor.



TWIN LAKES CHURCH, HORN LAKE, honored pastor John Hankins and his wife Gail for 10 years of service Sept. 20.



Eight members of churches from **PEARL RIVER ASSOCIATION** and four other members from churches in North Mississippi participated in a mission trip to Honduras in January, working in VBS and construction. Shown are Louis Moak, Wendy Wise, Keri Beth Peterson, and pastor Barry Lee, Rolling Hills Church, McNeill.

HOLMESVILLE CHURCH, MCCOMB, presented (from left) Wade Guy, Darryl Chun, Sue Kyzar, and Walter Martin letters of appreciation for their work in the construction of the church's new fellowship hall.



New LifeWay program sparks fundraising ideas

NASHVILLE (BP) — When she discovered her cousin Melanie had cancer, Kristi Parker wanted to help. Using a new service named LifeWay Shares, Parker raised more than \$1,700 to provide financial assistance — all by selling T-shirts online.

Melanie's husband designed a butterfly for the T-shirt and they selected a favorite Bible verse. Through selling the shirts, Parker helped Melanie and her family with medical bills and other costs.

"It's a great program," Parker said, "and a true blessing to my cousin during her fight with breast cancer."

Those are the type of stories that drive Cathy Brown and others working on LifeWay Shares, a funding program from LifeWay Christian Resources. "It is an amazing feeling to offer a service that brings someone to tears because they were able to help their cousin with cancer," Brown said.

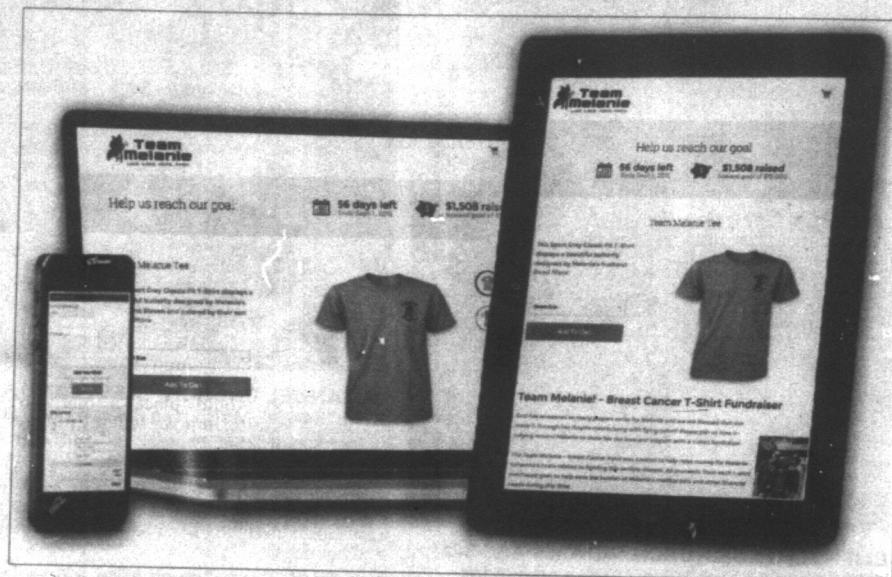
Brown said in addition to campaigns to assist with medical costs, other individuals and groups have used LifeWay

Shares to help with mission trips, adoptions, the purchasing of a church bus, and building projects. Ministries also are using it to benefit women released from jail who are looking for jobs and to provide aid to refugees seeking an escape from ISIS in the Middle East.

Brown, manager of LifeWay Shares, said the service uses custom designed T-shirts to garner both donations and attention to a cause. She said the only thing fundraisers need to do is promote their individual online site where supporters can purchase the shirts.

A commercial for sports fundraising sparked the idea for Brown. "It began as we were looking for new ways to help ministries and churches," she said. After discussing the T-shirt idea with a screen printer, they were able to launch LifeWay Shares.

Those raising funds have no out-of-pocket costs. They can customize their T-shirt by choosing from LifeWay Share's design collection or by uploading their own art. A website is created for each T-shirt with Facebook ads sent



to help publicize the event. Anyone can go to the site, buy a shirt and have it mailed directly to their home.

At the end of the campaign, the fundraiser is mailed a check

for the difference between the total amount raised and the minimal cost for each T-shirt.

While Brown is pleased with those features, the causes that LifeWay Shares has been able

to help are the greatest part of the experience, she said. "We are able to impact communities through these sites."

For more information, visit LifeWayShares.com.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **East Union Church, Magnolia:** Homecoming, Oct. 4; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; service, 11 a.m., followed by meal. Dave Luce, speaker; Billy Ray Simmons, music.

► **Benton Church, Benton:** 60th anniversary and homecoming, Oct. 4; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon service; Bill McCreary, speaker; Dennis Perry, music; Charles Moore, pastor.

► **Juniper Grove Church, Poplarville:** Revival, Oct. 4 - 7, Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Blake Newsome, speaker; Dionne Williams, music.

► **First Church, Lauderdale:** 42nd annual homecoming, Oct. 4; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:45 a.m., followed by meal; Bill Webb, speaker.

► **New Hope Church, Foxworth:** Homecoming, Oct. 4; Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Christian Stubbs, speaker.

► **Enon Church, Grenada:** Homecoming, Oct. 4; service, 11 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Ricky Harris, speaker; Brandon Lofton, music.

► **Crestview Church, Petal:** Revival, Oct. 4 - 7; Sun., 11 a.m. followed by covered dish dinner and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 7 p.m.; Steven Howell, speaker; Paul Ronie and



MOUNT VERNON CHURCH, LAUDERDALE COUNTY ASSOCIATION, recently celebrated its 125th anniversary. Jim Futral presented a proclamation to Dot Bessley for being a member of the church the longest.

Answered Prayer, music.

► **Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg:** Homecoming, Oct. 4; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m. followed by lunch; Jim Futral, speaker; Crossbridge, music; Michael Morgan, pastor.

► **Smyrna Church, Hazlehurst:** Homecoming, Oct. 4; service, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon service; Bill Youngblood, speaker; Jennifer Johns and Jay Johns, music.

► **Moselle Memorial Church, Moselle:** Home-

coming, Oct. 4, 10 a.m., followed by lunch.

► **Courtland Church, Courtland:** Homecoming, Oct. 4; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck dinner on the grounds; previous pastors, speakers; Jonathan Ellis Family, music.

► **Union Church, Tyler town:** 200th anniversary and homecoming, Oct. 7 - 9, 6:30 p.m.; Oct. 10, old fashioned day, 10 a.m.; Oct. 11, 10 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds.

MS POSITIONS

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH IN MONTICELLO, MS, IS SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. You may call 601-320-2785 for more information.

THE TRI-COUNTY BAPTIST MISSION (LAWRENCE, MARION, AND WALTHAM BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS) IS RECEIVING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATE ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS DIRECTOR through October 31, 2015. Resumes can be mailed to PO Box 350, Columbia MS 39429 (attention Executive Committee), or emailed to tricitybaptistmissions@gmail.com.

ENON BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH. Send resumes to 2604 Carrollton Rd Grenada, MS 38901 or email to enonbaptistchurch@outlook.com or call 662-226-0776.

GUNTER ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN FLORENCE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please submit resumes to Gunter Road Search Committee C/O Craig Dukes 2209 Woodland Place Florence, MS 39073 or roddukes@bellsouth.net.

GOSS BAPTIST CHURCH, COLUMBIA, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A MUSIC MINISTER THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2015. Please send resumes to 20 Mark McArthur Dr., Columbia, MS 39429 ATTN: Music Search Committee or email to markmc26@att.net.

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN VICKSBURG, MS IS SEEKING A YOUTH MINISTER. Please send resumes to Trinity Baptist Church Search Committee, 3365 Porters Chapel Rd. Vicksburg, MS 39180 or email Charlie Harris at C3harrisjr@yahoo.com.

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FUR FUV DQ QOJ UR GUOYY DVGR

OSOVB.

ZODM FRB: FUVDFJ-TAID

Clue: Z = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 22:42

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004. © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscapes, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Planned Parenthood defunding moving through U.S. House

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. House of Representatives voted Sept. 18 to defund Planned Parenthood in the wake of the release of undercover videos providing evidence of the organization's trade in baby body parts. On the same date, the House also approved legislation to protect babies who survive abortions.

House members passed the bills in the face of U.S. President Barack Obama's promise to veto both measures. Representatives voted 241-187 for the Defund Planned Parenthood Act, H.R. 3134. The bill would place a one-year moratorium on federal money for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and its affiliates while Congress investigates the organization.

The vote came after the release since mid-July of 10 secretly recorded videos that show Planned Parenthood officials discussing the sale of organs from aborted children and acknowledging their willingness to manipu-

late the abortion procedure to preserve body parts for sale and use.

The videos also provided evidence of cutting into live babies to remove organs.

The House passed the Born-alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, H.R. 3504, by 248-177. The proposal, which builds on the 2002 Born-alive Infants Protection Act, would require appropriate care and hospital admission for a child who lives through an abortion or attempted abortion.

The White House, however, made it clear two days before the votes that the president would veto the bills if they reach his desk. The administration "strongly opposes" approval of the measures because they "would have the same consequence of limiting women's health care choices," according to a statement issued Sept. 16.

The House votes "are evidence of just how wedded to the idea of abortion on-demand, at any time, for any reason, that the Democratic

Party has become," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List, in a written statement. "Where is the compassion and concern for 'the little guy,' the abortion survivor, whose heart is beating and alive?"

The sponsor of the abortion survivors measure expressed dismay at the president's veto promise.

"President Obama will be remembered as the abortion President and nothing will mark his administration with more shame and dishonor than his lack of compassion and protection toward millions of innocent and voiceless little babies," said Rep. Trent Franks (R.-Az.) in written comments.

The battle for the proposals moves to the Senate, where Democrats appear to have enough votes to prevent passage as stand-alone measures. Rep. Diane Black (R.-Tn.) sponsor of the PPFA defunding bill, urged Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to give her proposal a chance.

"At least give it a vote," she told McConnell in a radio interview on The Catholic Channel. "Don't throw up the white flag before you've fought the fight."

She will call every senator she knows to seek passage in that chamber, said Black, whose legislation would divert funds to other federally qualified health centers.

House committees are conducting investigations of Planned Parenthood in light of the undercover videos. The House Judiciary Committee held the first of two hearings on the subject Sept. 9.

Preschool Care for Convention

Preschool care will be available for children by pre-registration, ages birth through five, at First Church, Jackson, during the Pastors' Conference and the Mississippi Baptist Convention, from noon on October 26 through October 28. To pre-register, contact Michelle Sansing, childcare coordinator, at (601) 949-1997. All children must be pre-registered by Monday, October 19. The preschool departments are located on the street level off North State Street. Following are the procedures: (1) Pre-register, giving name and age of each child, the parent, and the church. (2) Pick up a security card for each child on arrival. (3) Be sure all belongings are labeled. (4) For infants, leave a time schedule for feeding. (5) Leave the children no earlier than 15 minutes before the beginning of a session and pick them up no later than 15 minutes after the close of the session. Children may remain in the preschool area during the Convention lunch break on Oct. 27, if parents provide a sack lunch.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

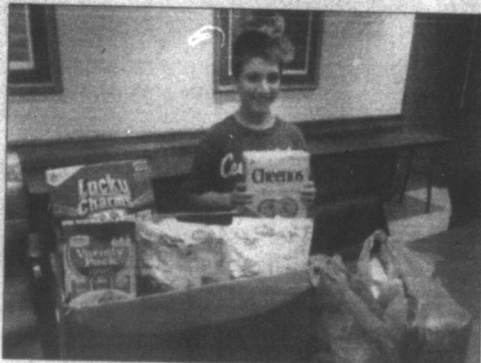
A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

AUGUST 16-31, 2015

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Wendy Carol Goodman
Mr. & Mrs. James Sanders
Mr. Doyle Heffner
Jerusalem BC
Mrs. Gladys Henderson
Dr. Neil & Tonya Simmons
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander
Mrs. Theron Poole
Mrs. Katie Holden
Liberty BC
Mrs. Shirley C. Thomas
Ms. Leslie B. Hebert
Ms. Teri S. Boudreau
Mr. Marvin Holland
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Mr. & Mrs. James Sanders
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John Neil, a 6th grader, representing the RAs and GAs of **FBC VICKSBURG** delivered with the help of his brother and mom breakfast items and hand painted nativity scenes to The BCV.

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Patsy V. Sanders
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Mr. Harold Sisney
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Family of Marion D. Copeland
Millard Smith
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Mr. Gerald Stanford
Rev. Jimmy Breland
Mr. James Stevenson
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Ms. Judy H. Lacy
M. A. Tankesly Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. W. M. McElroy
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SEPTEMBER 1-15, 2015

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SEPTEMBER 1-15, 2015

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Patricia Lankford
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Mr. & Mrs. Joe Crowson

SOCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

The BCV has an immediate opening for an individual to fill the position of Social Services Secretary in the agency's headquarters in Ridgeland. The individual filling this position must be a mature Christian adult with personal integrity, Christian character and a sound reputation. This individual must also have a demonstrated commitment to the ethical standards incumbent upon each staff member of the BCV staff and an appreciation of the confidentiality extended to children and families served by the BCV. This individual must be able to deal with children and adults in a warm, accepting manner. The successful candidate must have a minimum of an associate's degree or equivalent, and training and experience in secretarial tasks and be proficient in general office computing tasks, specifically word processing, spreadsheet applications and data entry in various applications. Other significant responsibilities include phone coverage, extensive filing and significant interactions with members of the social service and clinical staff.

To apply for this position, please contact Kristen Slaven, Director of Social Services at kslaven@baptistchildrensvillage.com. Applications are available at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com. Please complete and send it, along with a statement of faith and a resume copy to Ms. Slaven at 114 Marketridge Drive, Ridgeland, MS 39157.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

A Fresh Start • Genesis 8:15-22; 9:1, 11-16

The flood was over and only eight humans remained. Genesis 9:1 reads, "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," (KJV). God started over with Noah and his three sons. Man still sinned, for the next event in Genesis involves drunkenness, Noah's cursing his own grandchildren, and strained relationships. God told Noah and his sons to replenish the earth, just as He told Adam and Eve. God began again with a new agreement with humans.

God established a covenant, or agreement with Noah and it still applies to us. Genesis 9:8-9 reads, "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you," (KJV). We are all Noah's seed. God's covenants with humans always depend on Him and not us. The message of Genesis to this point is that we cannot keep our end of a covenant with God. God's word reveals that we are incapable of perfection, and that everyone's "imagination of his hearts is evil from our youth."

Therefore, God set up order because of human sin. God said He will no longer curse the ground, (Genesis 8:21).

From this covenant on, God demanded that whoever takes a life shall lose his life by mankind, (Genesis 9:6). God established order to the chaos of sin. God made animals to fear humans from then on, (Genesis 9:2). The seasons were established, as described first in Genesis 8:22, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease," (KJV).

God then set the rainbow in the sky as a constant reminder of His covenant with humans,

and His reminder that He will never again destroy the earth with water. The rainbow is a sign of God's grace. Our sins abound, but the rainbow is over us. This is a picture of God's grace and love. He sees the bow, the sign of His covenant. When you see a rainbow, remember that we are sinners and the God is gracious. Genesis 9:16 reads, "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look

upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth," (KJV). God did not set the rainbow to remind Him of the covenant because He is forgetful, but because we ever sin. Our sins are odious to Him, but the rainbow points to His sweet smelling covenant with us, sealed by Noah's sacrifice, (Genesis 8:21).

Today the rainbow is a modern sign of diversity, though in reality, it is still a sign of God's grace. God's covenant always require that we admit we cannot please Him on our

own. Satan attempts to co-opt God's work to confuse and deceive humans. The world says, "You are okay as you are. Celebrate your diversity and uniqueness." God, however, will ultimately succeed in His plans. His rainbow is not the acceptance of all sins, but a sign of God's grace in spite of our

sinfulness. Lost people focus on God's love and never His requirement to repent and turn from their sins. The old song "And When I Die" said, "I swear there ain't no heaven, but I pray there ain't no hell."

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed in Isaiah 5:20-21, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (KJV). Sin is sin, even if everyone says it is not. In today's society, the only sin is saying something is a sin.

God requires confession and repentance, not confrontation and defiance. No diversity exists on earth, for we are all sinners in need of a savior, and Jesus is God's Savior for our sins. The rainbow may be to those deceived (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) as an okay to be who you are and do what you desire, but to those who trust in Christ, it will always be a sign that we are sinners with an amazing Savior. So when you see a rainbow, thank the Lord for Jesus and for His amazing grace.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.



Explore the Bible
with Rick Henson

God's Promise of Victory • Romans 8:28-39

Before there's even a nip in the air, football season arrives. Announcers, writers and fans re-hashing of teams' performances provide commentary for newspapers, sportscasts and Facebook.

Amidst all the football fervor, it's clear: you win some; you lose some. And as the losing team and fans sulk and moan, the victorious ones have earned bragging rights, and are on shoutin' ground.

We all prefer to be on the winning side. However, in life, we sometimes have to settle for less. Or do we? Actually, in today's focal verses, we see God has a much better plan. This chapter of Romans, a pinnacle of Scripture, has given hope to discouraged saints over the centuries.

Paul begins his victory march in verse one by declaring, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..." (NKJV). He builds upon this, reminding us of our sonship, the indwelling Holy Spirit, support for our weaknesses, and answered prayer. He continues with shoutin' ground words in verse 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Note, it doesn't say that all things happening to us are good. Living in a fallen world, horrendous and heartbreaking things come upon those who know

Christ and those who don't. However, even in distressing circumstances, God can use those very difficulties to work His goodness into our lives (note the words, "work together" in the verse. Also, the verse's promise is reserved for those who love God and follow His plan).

Verse 29-30 contains concepts that are much-debated, and dedicated believers can be found on both sides. Salvation encompasses God's sovereignty and omniscience, as well as the individual's free will; both of these aspects are present in the Bible. Let's look at the words, and see how they fall in line in the verses: First, God "foreknew". Then He "predestined", "called", "justified" and "glorified". When it says the eternal Father "foreknew", it shows that, looking down the corridors of time, before Adam even named his wife, God possessed the knowledge of who would accept Jesus' offer of salvation, and who would reject it. To this writer, the "foreknew" leads to the "predestined". It doesn't say certain ones were pre-

destined for salvation, but that they were "predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (verse 29). Ephesians 2:10 adds insight to this by declaring that God had good works "prepared beforehand" for those who are "created in Christ Jesus."

The verses continue the progress that began with God's foreknowledge: these followers would be called, justified, and ultimately glorified. To understand this to mean some are "called" to salvation and some are not would be

to dismiss the "all" of such verses as John 12:32 (Jesus said He would draw all men to Himself) and 2 Peter 3:9 (the Lord

"is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"), as well as various invitations to "whosoever."

Paul concludes the chapter on a roll. Can't you just imagine the excitement in his voice accelerating as he sums up the Father's all-encompassing love and power? "What then shall we say to these things?" he asks rhetorically (v. 31). "If God is for us, who can be

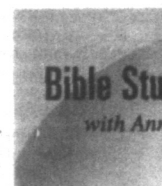
against us?" His deduction: if God didn't even spare His precious Son, "but delivered Him up for us all" (v. 32), shouldn't we confidently expect Him to supply everything we need?

Some may seek to criticize or condemn us, but when that happens, we can recall our position in Christ. We're already justified (v. 33), and Christ is at God's right hand, interceding on our behalf (v. 34).

In the next verse, Paul continues his questions: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He recalls difficult situations he himself (except for the sword) had experienced (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Should such things leave us frustrated and defeated? No! He declared, even among such trials, "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (v. 37; Psalm 27:1). With confidence, he completes his list of problems and powers that can't separate us from God's love (vs. 38-39).

Paul had an immovable confidence in God. We can have the same. Victory is ours because the Lord's love and power are constant. Take comfort in Jesus' words in John 16:33: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Ann Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Ocean Springs.



Bible Studies for Life
with Ann Maniscalco



LifeWay Research: Pope Francis raises Catholic image

NASHVILLE (BP) — Nearly four in 10 Protestant pastors say Pope Francis, leader of Roman Catholics worldwide known for his humility and concern for the poor, has had a positive impact on their opinions of the Catholic Church, LifeWay Research finds.

Almost two-thirds of those pastors view Pope Francis as a genuine Christian and "brother in Christ." However, half of Protestant pastors say they do not value Pope Francis' opinion on matters of theology.

LifeWay Research, a research division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, asked 1,000 Protestant pastors in America about their views in a phone survey from Sept. 8-21, shortly before the pontiff's visit to the United States.

Pope Francis, who in March 2013 became the first non-European and first Jesuit priest to be named pope, has been outspoken on such issues as welcoming immigrants, shunning materialism, and protecting the environment. He is Argentinian by birth.

For 43% of Protestant pastors, Pope Francis has not changed their views of the Catholic Church. However, half say the current pope has affected their opinions — and nearly three times as many cite a positive impact (37%) as a negative one (14%).

"Our sample itself — Protestant pastors — is named after the Protestant Reformation, so they are particularly interesting to survey," said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research. "The survey says that this pope does, indeed, have a 'Francis effect,' even on a group of people named for protesting the very faith the pope leads."

Ninety percent of Protestant pastors agree Catholics can be "born-again Christians," but they are less certain whether Pope Francis is their "brother in Christ." Sixty-three percent believe he is a genuine Christian, while 22% disagree and 16% are unsure.

Evangelical pastors report more skepticism about Pope Francis than their mainline Protestant counterparts. While 80% of mainline Protestant pastors believe the pope is a true Christian, only 58% of evangelical pastors agree.

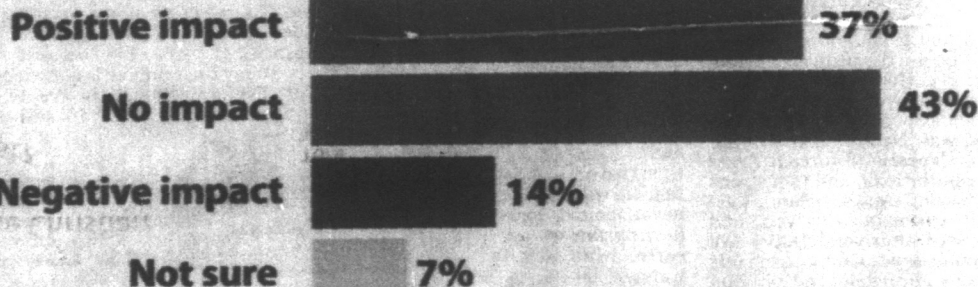
"The fact that some pastors don't see the pope as their 'brother in Christ' seems strange to many outside Protestantism and evangelicalism, I imagine," Stetzer said. "However, the forerunners of most Protestant pastors — from Luther, to Wesley, to Spurgeon, to many others — certainly did not see the pope as their 'brother in Christ.'"

"Within a few centuries, the pope has gone from anti-Christ to 'brother in Christ' for a lot of Protestants."

Protestant pastors are divided on whether they value Pope

Among Protestant Pastors:

What impact has Pope Francis had on your opinion of the Catholic Church?



Note: Does not equal 100% due to rounding.

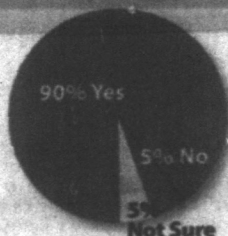
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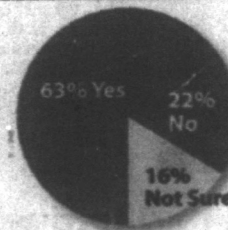
Among Protestant Pastors:

VIEWS ON POPE FRANCIS & CATHOLICS

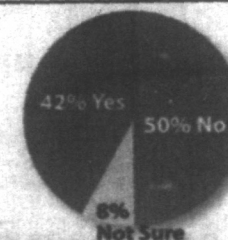
Can a Catholic be a born-again Christian?



Do you view Pope Francis as a genuine Christian and your brother in Christ?



Do you value Pope Francis' opinions on theological matters?



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

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Methodology

The phone survey of Protestant pastors was conducted Sept. 8-21. The calling list was a stratified random sample drawn from a list of all Protestant churches in America. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister, or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted by region to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2%. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Mainline pastors are also more likely to say Pope Francis has influenced their opinion of the Catholic Church, with 50% saying the impact has been positive and nine percent saying it has been negative.

In contrast, 30% of evangelical pastors say Pope Francis has boosted their opinion of Catholicism, while 15% say their opinion has declined.

Favorable views of Pope Francis are most pronounced

among highly educated Protestant pastors and those in the Northeast, the survey finds.

Fifty-one percent of Protestant pastors in the Northeast say Pope Francis improves their opinion of the Catholic Church, compared to 38% in the Midwest, 34% in the South, and 31% in the West. Most Northeastern pastors (53%) also say they value the pope's opinions on theological matters, a view shared by fewer than half of pastors in the Midwest (45%), South (39%), and West (38%).

Sixty-nine percent of Protestant pastors with a master's or doctoral degree view Pope Francis as a genuine Christian and brother in Christ, compared to 42% of those with a bachelor's degree or no college degree.

Those with a master's degree or higher are also significantly more likely to say they value Pope Francis' opinions on theological matters (49%), and that the pope improves their opinion of the Catholic Church (43%).

Among those with less formal education, 22% value the pope's theological opinion and 18% say he has a positive impact on their view of Catholicism.